

Appl. No. 10/713,985
Amdt. dated June 14, 2005
Reply to Office action of March 24, 2005

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Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) In combination with a closed umbrella, including a canopy-forming portion, the improvement which comprises~~An apparatus which prevents a closed umbrella from opening comprising:~~
 - a ring, wherein the ring comprises a continuous circle and is removably arranged around said canopy-forming portion of said closed umbrella to prevent said umbrella from opening; and
 - a handle, wherein the handle comprises a proximal end and a distal end, wherein the proximal end is substantially perpendicular to the distal end, wherein the distal end is fixably coupled to the ring, and wherein the proximal end is adapted to be held in a user's hand.
2. (canceled)
3. (original) The apparatus as recited in claim 1, wherein the handle comprises a length which enables a standing user to raise the ring above an uppermost point of a vertical table umbrella.
4. (currently amended) The apparatus as recited in claim ~~2~~1, wherein the handle has a length greater than one half a length of a rib of the umbrella.

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5. (currently amended) The apparatus as recited in claim 21, wherein the umbrella comprises a center post, wherein the ring comprises a sidewall, wherein the sidewall is substantially parallel to the center post when the ring is arranged around the ribs of an umbrella, wherein the sidewall comprises a plurality of openings therethrough, and wherein the apparatus further comprises a plurality of embellishments arranged within respective said plurality of openings.
6. (original) The apparatus as recited in claim 3, wherein the ring is adapted to slide downward from the uppermost point of the umbrella, and wherein the ring comes to rest at a spaced distance below the uppermost point of the vertical umbrella.
7. (original) The apparatus as recited in claim 4, wherein a center post of the closed umbrella extends through a table, wherein the handle is in contact with the table's top and extends upward such that the ring is arranged at a spaced distance from the uppermost point of the closed umbrella, and wherein the spaced distance is at least one half the length of a rib of the umbrella.
8. (original) The apparatus as recited in claim 6, wherein the ring has an inner diameter approximately equivalent to the outer diameter of the closed umbrella at the spaced distance below the uppermost point of the vertical umbrella.
9. (original) The apparatus as recited in claim 6, wherein the spaced distance is greater than one half the length of an umbrella rib.
10. (original) The apparatus as recited in claim 7, wherein the distal end of the handle is substantially perpendicular to an axis extending radially from the center of the ring.
11. (original) The apparatus as recited in claim 10, wherein the proximal end of the handle is substantially rectangular, wherein the proximal end of the handle comprises a

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rectangular cutout area, and wherein the cutout area is adapted to accommodate the user's hand.

12. (original) The apparatus as recited in claim 11, wherein the proximal end of the handle lies flat upon a tabletop when the ring is arranged on an umbrella.

13. (currently amended) ~~An apparatus for securing~~ In combination with a stationary closed outdoor umbrella including a body, said apparatus comprising the improvement which comprises:

a ring, wherein the ring is adapted to removably circumscribes the body of ~~a the~~ large, closed outdoor umbrella to prevent said umbrella from opening; and
a handle, wherein the handle is fixably coupled to the ring, and wherein the handle is utilized to place the ring on the umbrella.

14. (original) The apparatus as recited in claim 13, wherein the handle comprises a rod-like member and a hand-hold, wherein the rod-like member extends between the ring and the hand-hold.

15. (original) The apparatus as recited in claim 13, wherein the ring comprises at least one cutout area, and wherein the cutout area is fitted with a removable, user-configurable embellishment.

16. (original) The apparatus as recited in claim 14, wherein the rod-like member comprises a proximal end and a distal end, wherein the hand-hold is perpendicular to the rod-like member, wherein the ring is perpendicular to the rod-like member; wherein the hand-hold is coupled to the proximal end, and wherein the ring is coupled to the distal end.

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17. (original) The apparatus as recited in claim 15, wherein the at least one radial cutout area comprises a hole cut through a sidewall of the ring.
18. (currently amended) The apparatus as recited in claim 16, wherein the ring has an inner diameter less than the largest outer diameter of ~~a~~ the closed outdoor umbrella.
19. (canceled)
20. (original) A method of securing an outdoor umbrella, said method comprising:
 - closing an umbrella such that the post and the ribs of the umbrella are substantially vertical;
 - raising an umbrella retaining apparatus above an uppermost extent of the umbrella, wherein the umbrella retaining apparatus comprises a ring coupled to a handle;
 - placing the ring about the uppermost extent of the umbrella; and
 - lowering the ring until the inner diameter of the ring is commensurate with an outer surface of a cross-sectional circumference of the umbrella.